

## Two and a Half Teeth

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Charlie Sheen has given the media endless hours of material over the past weeks with his wild rants and erratic behavior. Unable to escape the spotlight...his teeth. There are many reports and some photos that suggest Charlie Sheen's teeth are losing the battle against his drug abuse. His teeth are visibly worn, black and decayed or missing. The likely cause of this unsightly smile is drug abuse. It is the professional opinion of Dr. Jonathan Campbell that Charlie Sheen is likely wearing a prosthetic device to snap over his rotting teeth. There are some photos and interviews where Sheen is shown without this prosthesis and his appearance is alarming.

Unfortunately, the tragic results of drug abuse are not something we escape seeing at Legacy Dental. We often treat patients whose dental health has paid the price of their drug use and abuse. The effects of drugs on the teeth are both psychological and physiological. Drug users are unlikely to value oral health rituals when under the influence and they tend to turn to high calorie, carbonated and sugary drinks when they are using.

The physiological effects of drug abuse include dry mouth, clenching or grinding of the teeth and decreased blood flow. Dry mouth contributes to tooth decay because saliva acts as a "buffer" against acid; decreased salivary flow significantly increases a patient's risk of tooth decay. Clenching and grinding may lead to worn and broken teeth. Decreased blood flow can affect the gum tissue that surrounds the teeth contributing to gum (periodontal) disease. Drugs such as methamphetamine are made with a dangerous mix of chemicals - none of which are meant for consumption and all of which are incredibly harmful to the teeth.

Back to Sheen, all of these chemicals are certainly able to "melt your face off" and likely to melt your teeth off, figuratively speaking. Even Sheen's Tiger's Blood is not a cure for tooth destruction caused by drug abuse. Adonis' DNA cannot escape it. I admit that I have soaked up many of the interviews with Sheen in pure disbelief, I have used and continue to use many of his outrageous quotes and engaged in water cooler conversation about his behavior. But as I took a step back to write this article, I was truly sad for Sheen. I am sad for his children, family and the people who love him. I am sad for the all those who are being held in the grips of this deadly addiction. I hope for all of those people the gift of sobriety and happiness without drug use.